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Investing in rural people

Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness

Note to Evaluation Committee members

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Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Review

Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness

1. Introduction. In line with the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Evaluation Committee and the decision taken by the Executive Board at its December 2006 session, this document contains the comments of IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) on the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE).
2. The RIDE provides management's perspectives on the organization's performance against the main indicators in the results measurement framework (RMF). It is an important tool for promoting accountability and maximizing institutional learning.
3. General comments. IOE considers the RIDE to be an important management instrument, providing an account of performance based on IFAD's self-evaluation data. IOE commends management for producing a good and informative report, particularly because this year's document has a greater focus on strengths and weaknesses, and related remedial actions than in previous years.
4. Overall, the RIDE is consistent with the results reported in the 2015 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI). In fact, the RIDE reports improved performance of IFAD's operations on important evaluation criteria such as rural poverty impact. The RIDE also underlines several challenges that were identified in the ARRI, including sustainability of benefits, operational efficiency and government performance.
5. However, there are some issues that merit attention moving forward. First, IOE finds that many of its comments on the previous edition of the RIDE have not been adequately addressed in the 2015 RIDE. Therefore, the same comments also apply to this year's edition of the document, and IOE encourages Management to incorporate them into the next edition of the RIDE.
6. Specifically, the RIDE should include:
 - (i) A wider discussion of the methodological approach and corresponding limitations;
 - (ii) Assessments of an indicator for knowledge management, the relevance of its operations and IFAD's performance as a partner during the period of the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD10) and beyond;
 - (iii) A paragraph at the beginning of the report summarizing IOE's main comments on the previous edition of the RIDE and describing how they have been addressed; and
 - (iv) A concluding section.
7. Second, IOE notes that there are areas reported in the RIDE that are not coherent with the results reported in the ARRI, including in the areas of project relevance, efficiency, sustainability and scale up (see annex 1). There is room to improve the alignment of IFAD's self- and independent-evaluation systems in order to coordinate results reporting. The introduction of the new evaluation manual in 2016 – together with a new harmonization agreement between IFAD Management and IOE – will enhance the consistency of IFAD's broader evaluation system.
8. Specific comments. The tables in the main text of the RIDE showing the performance against the five levels of the IFAD9 RMF present the results only for projects completed between 2011 and 2013; this prevents any analysis of trends in performance over time. In addition, no further disaggregation of results by rating category (such as "moderately satisfactory", "satisfactory" and "highly satisfactory"), geographic or thematic disaggregation is provided in the report. These factors also limit the comparison of results with the ARRI.

9. Paragraph 10 in the RIDE provides the results of an analysis of IFAD's performance in fragile states, but lacks quantitative evidence or data. Moreover, the 2015 ARRI underlines that – in spite of possible improvements – further efforts are needed to enhance performance in fragile situations by customizing IFAD's development approaches and operating model. For example, based on independent evaluation data, 88 per cent of projects were rated as moderately satisfactory or better in non-fragile states for gender, while just 78 per cent of projects in fragile states achieved that rating. Similar trends may be observed in innovation and scaling up, in which 85 per cent of projects implemented in non-fragile states were rated as moderately satisfactory or better compared to 69 per cent in fragile states.
10. Despite the results reported in table 4 on national policy dialogue and partnership-building, independent evaluation data show less positive results in these areas. In fact, policy dialogue and partnership-building were rated as moderately satisfactory or better in 58 per cent and 77 per cent respectively of country programme evaluations conducted in 2012-2014. This performance is lower than that reported in the RIDE and is below the targets set in the IFAD9 RMF. Factors limiting policy dialogue and partnership-building are related to the often over-ambitious agenda set by country strategic opportunity programmes (COSOPS) and insufficient attention to national policy dialogue and partnership, including with other Rome-based agencies and the private sector.
11. Beyond the project level, it would be useful if the RIDE were to include an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of IFAD's country strategies. This would provide a better sense of IFAD's overall performance at the country level (beyond individual operations) in promoting rural transformation. It would also allow for better assessment of how non-lending activities mutually reinforce IFAD's lending activities to achieve country strategy objectives. Similarly, assessing knowledge management would allow IFAD to track performance in this area, which is critical for generating lessons that feed into design and implementation for better development effectiveness.
12. Paragraph 20 presents IFAD's progress in improving project monitoring and evaluation. Independent evaluations have shown that monitoring and evaluation remain challenging at both the project and country levels. Issues that require attention include the need for quality and timely baseline data, more robust and measurable indicators, and greater attention to outcome and impact data collection and analysis, especially in the areas of nutritional impact and disaggregation by gender.
13. Conclusions. IOE considers the RIDE to be an important management report together with the ARRI produced by IOE. There are opportunities for further developing the analytical basis of the RIDE, such as devoting more attention to statistical analysis and the corresponding presentation of data. It would also be useful for the RIDE to benchmark IFAD's operational performance with comparable multilateral organizations that produce similar annual reports based on self-evaluation data – a practice already utilized in the ARRI.

Table 1
Comparison of IOE PCRV/PPA* ratings and the PMD* project completion report ratings for all evaluation criteria

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Mean rating</i>		<i>Difference in mean rating</i>	<i>Mode ratings</i>	
	IOE	PMD		IOE	PMD
1. Relevance	4.32	4.75	-0.44	4	5
2. Effectiveness	3.92	4.15	-0.24	4	4
3. Efficiency	3.63	3.90	-0.26	4	4
4. Rural poverty impact	4.13	4.17	-0.04	4	5
5. Sustainability	3.67	3.96	-0.29	4	4
6. Innovation and scaling up	4.11	4.40	-0.29	4	5
7. Gender equality and women's empowerment	4.28	4.46	-0.18	4	4
8. IFAD performance	4.16	4.44	-0.27	4	5
9. Government performance	3.80	3.98	-0.18	4	4
10. Environment	3.86	4.11	-0.26	4	4
11. Institutions and policy	4.07	4.32	-0.25	4	5

* Project completion report valuation and project performance assessment.

** Programme Management Department.

Table 2
Comparison of ratings for indicators in level 2 of the IFAD9 RMF (2013-2015)

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>RIDE results</i>	<i>ARRI PCRV/PPA</i>	<i>Target 2015</i>
	<i>2011-2013 (80)</i>	<i>2011-2013 (55)</i>	
2.1. Outcome indicators (percentage of projects rated moderately satisfactory or better) at completion			
2.1.1 Relevance	98	85	100
2.1.2 Effectiveness	88	80	90
2.1.3 Efficiency	76	65	75
2.1.4 Rural poverty impact	88		
		87	90
2.1.5 Gender equality	93	89	90
2.1.6 Sustainability of benefits	81	62	75
2.1.7 Innovation and learning	86	82	90
2.1.8 Replication and scaling up	91	82	90
2.1.9 Government performance as a partner	78	75	80